

Case Study: Take Up of Funded Early Years Education

- Parents can be apprehensive at the thought of leaving their young child.
- Early years providers can support parents to do this. For example with
 - Home visits before the placement starts.
 - Adopting a gradual settling in approach.
 - Including parents in their child's learning – at home and in the nursery.

The family circumstances

The Working Together Hub supported parents to access funded two-year-old early years education.

A is a parent with one son (M) aged three years old. M received funded two-year-old early years education. He attended Sheringham Nursery for three hours a day for five days. A has a strong family network – her parents and siblings and those of her husband live close by.

A saw a banner advertising the funded two-year-old early years education entitlement outside a local community centre. She found out more information online. When she received a letter to say she was entitled, she immediately went to her local nursery – Sheringham.

Before M started at the nursery, two members of staff did a home visit. One of the staff would be M's key worker. The purpose of the home visit was to help reassure the family and ensure M had a familiar face when he started nursery.

“His key person did a home visit along with another member of staff for him to be familiarised with his teacher and how the placement works. They took pictures for his school books and gave me a date and a time to start and explained how he would be settled.”

Sheringham has a gradual settling in approach. This involves the child and parent spending an hour or so initially at the nursery. This gradually increases until the child is taking up his/her hours. During this time the parent leaves for a little longer each time until the parent is just dropping off and picking up their child

“Initially we came for an hour and that they gradually built up. A week in they did the separation and I left him for a few minutes and told him I was going to the toilet so he wouldn't worry. Length of separation depends on the child – mine took about two weeks.”

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A was very apprehensive at first at the thought of leaving her child. However she decided to 'give it a go', knowing that she could withdraw him if it didn't work out.

"At first I was really apprehensive because at that age they are so young. But I thought why not give it a try and if it works out fine but if it doesn't work out that's fine too. Every afternoon he goes in with a big cheeky smile when he sees his teacher. He's shy but I know he's happy by his big smile."

Some of the things that A believes contributed to a smooth settling in were the:

- familiarisation home visit
- gradual separation approach
- toys and environment and
- staff and management.

"It's all down to the staff and Sheringham and how they are managed. They left a photo of the staff and I put it on the fridge. Every day I would show it to M and tell him their names. By the time he started nursery he was already familiar with the staff and was saying their names. At first I left for 10 minutes in the hour and they increased his length of stay and they increased the length of the separation. He felt safe knowing mummy was around."

The nursery also worked closely with A to develop a strong home learning environment. Workshops for parents and programmes such as Easy Peasy¹ contributed to this.

"The nursery do lots of things like workshops to help upbringing children. For example 'bin the bottle', toilet training, language learning through play. They recently introduced Easy Peasy and I got my first message on Saturday. It's good as it all helps to bridge the gap between home and nursery."

A has noticed a big increase in her son's confidence level which she thinks is a result of him having a routine and spending regular time with staff and other children

¹ Easy Peasy is a 20-week programme. Parents receive a text once a week with a game that they can play with their child at home. The games can be at different levels and involve resources that parents have at home.